

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 3405

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU ON HUMAN RIGHTS

1. DURING RECENT DISCUSSION OF US-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU, HE ALLUDED TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES WE HELD AND WISHED TO APPLY IN THIS AREA, BUT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ULTIMATE EFFECTS ON US RELATIONS WITH ITS FOREIGN FRIENDS. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THE NEGATIVE REACTIONS ALREADY EXPRESSED BY CERTAIN LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS. AS FOR THE REPORTS RELEASED BY CONGRESS, MOBUTU SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE CRITICISMS MADE ABOUT ZAIRE WHEN SO MANY OTHER GOVERNMENTS (HE MENTIONED ALGERIA AS AN EXAMPLE) WERE WELL KNOWN FOR THEIR HARSH CONTROLS OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS AND YET WERE NOT SINGLED OUT FOR SIMILAR CRITICISM. ALSO, HE NOTED, THE UNITED STATES ITSELF HAD ITS OWN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFICIENCIES. MOBUTU SAID HE FEARED THAT OUR CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD SERVE ONLY TO ALIENATE OUR FRIENDS WHILE HAVING LITTLE EFFECT ON OUR ADVERSARIES WHO WERE IN REALITY THE MAIN OFFENDERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. I RESPONDED THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE OBVIOUSLY HAD MANY FACETS AND WOULD REQUIRE JUDICIOUS APPLICATION. WE WERE NOT OUT TO "GET" OUR FRIENDS OR, FOR THAT MATTER, OUR ADVERSARIES

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EITHER. THE ADMINISTRATION HAD CLEARLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD ITS OWN PROBLEMS AND WOULD NOT OBJECT IF OTHERS COMMENTED ON THEM. IF I HAD LEARNED ANYTHING DURING MY ABBREVIATED CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON LAST MONTH, IT WAS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS SERIOUS IN ITS CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN ITS INTENTION TO MAINTAIN THIS AS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IN THE CONDUCT OF OUR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

3. AS FOR ZAIRE, IT WAS QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE THAT IN VIEW OF EXISTING LEGISLATION AND OUR SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS WOULD HAVE AN INTEREST IN CONDITIONS HERE. ONLY RECENTLY THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN HAD BEEN ASKED AGAIN ABOUT ZAIRE'S SITUATION AND HAD MADE CLEAR IN HIS RESPONSE THAT LIKE MOST OTHER COUNTRIES ZAIRE HAD PROBLEMS BUT WE DID NOT CONSIDER THEM TO BE SO PERVASIVE AS TO WARRANT ADJUSTING OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. I NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT WE WERE OBLIGED TO KEEP HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN ZAIRE AS ELSEWHERE UNDER CONTINUING REVIEW.

4. COMMENT: I BELIEVE MOBUTU GENUINELY HAS TROUBLE SQUARING IN HIS OWN MIND HOW WE CAN MAINTAIN WHAT HE VIEWS AS AN OVERLY IDEALISTIC AND RIGID POSTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT HARMING OUR OTHER INTERESTS. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME HE HAS EXPRESSED TO ME HIS ANNOYANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S PUBLISHED CRITICISM OF CONDITIONS IN ZAIRE, NOT SO MUCH ON THE BASIS OF SPECIFIC FACTS BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF UNFAIR TREATMENT OF ZAIRE IN RELATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES. BUT IT IS CLEAR HE FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE WITH RESPECT TO OUR FOREIGN POLICIES, AND THIS IS NOT A BAD THING--PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME WHEN THE GOZ IS TEMPTED TO REACT FORCEFULLY AGAINST INCREASINGLY OUTSPOKEN POLITICAL OPPOSITION.
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